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ABSTRACT

In a multiunit school, teachers are organized into relatively autcnomous groups. Each group has a unit leader responsible fcr management and coordination of unit activities, who serves as a linkage to the principal. Decisionmaking functions and the influence system are lodged in the group, thus diffusing what would be the principal's authority in a traditionally organized school. Teachers report greater satisfaction with group participation in the decisicnmaking than with individual, centralized decisionmaking. A related dccument is EA 003 476. (RA)

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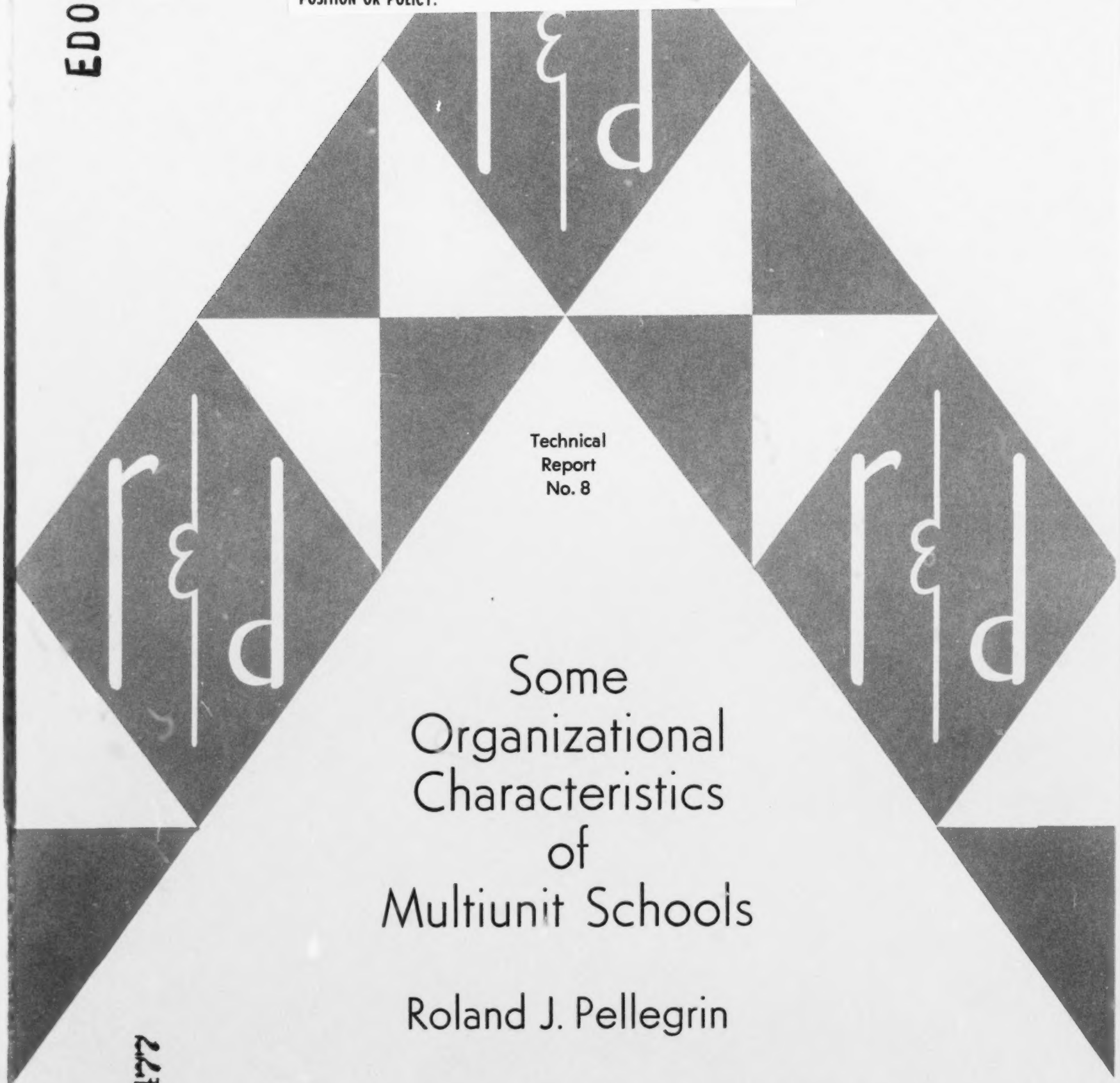

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Report
No. 8

Some Organizational Characteristics of Multiunit Schools

Roland J. Pellegrin

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INTRODUCTION

The program of the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon deals with the relationships between educational organization and instruction. Of particular relevance to the Center's mission is the study of the organization of schools in which significant innovations have occurred. For this reason, we were pleased to have the opportunity to study the organization and functioning of the multiunit school.

Our investigation is based on intensive case studies of eight schools. Four of these were multiunit schools; the other four were control schools selected by the Wisconsin R & D Center for Cognitive Learning. In this paper we shall report some of our data on three multiunit schools and their controls. The fourth school had not sufficiently implemented the multiunit program to justify its inclusion. In reporting our findings, the schools will not be identified by name.

The three pairs of schools studied are in different school districts. In each district we distributed questionnaires to all available professional personnel in the two schools and to central-office personnel whose work relates closely to the program of the elementary schools. These questionnaires were extremely detailed and extensive, covering a variety of matters pertaining to the characteristics of the schools and to the attitudes and goals of the respondents themselves. On the average, the questionnaires took 1-1/2 hours to complete. In addition to gathering data by means of these questionnaires, we also interviewed a majority of the persons to whom the questionnaires were administered. The principal, the unit leaders, half of the teachers, and two nonprofessionals were interviewed in each multiunit school. While the questionnaires did not mention multiunit schools, the interviews dealt mainly with matters pertaining to the multiunit program.

This paper serves as a preliminary report on some of our findings. The report is preliminary for two reasons: first, we have not yet completed an exhaustive analysis of all our data; second, the scope of our work is too broad to be summarized briefly. We shall undertake two tasks in this presentation. The first will be to summarize certain data dealing with the schools studied, and the second one will be to raise a few questions about the organizational problems that may arise in multiunit schools.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE OF MULTIUNIT SCHOOLS

In presenting a summary of organizational characteristics of multiunit schools, we shall focus attention on a few major topics. First we shall summarize materials dealing with interaction patterns in multiunit and control schools. This will be followed by a discussion of the division of labor, with emphasis on specialization in the unit and on the role of the unit leader. Next is an analysis of decision-making processes and influence hierarchies in multiunit and control schools. Finally, we present a brief discussion of the goals and attitudes of teachers, with special attention to operation objectives and job satisfaction.

interdependence relationships in multiunit and control schools

Regardless of its field of activity, an organization is structured in such a manner that it facilitates or encourages the interaction of certain members while it impedes or hinders the interaction of others. Studies of interaction patterns or networks in organizations show high rates of interaction occur under certain organizational conditions and low rates occur under other circumstances. In this research we are concerned only with certain types of interaction patterns among adults in multiunit and control schools. Instead of studying friendship choices or frequency of interaction, as is often done in sociometric analyses, we chose instead to examine what we call "interdependence relationships." This term refers to work-related patterns of interaction between people; it directs attention to those relationships between individuals that affect their ability to get their jobs done.

To identify interdependence relationships, we asked each respondent in the multiunit and control schools to complete the following items in a questionnaire:

1. "List the names of those persons both within and outside your school (other than students) upon whom you depend <u>most heavily</u> in order to perform your job effectively;"

2. "Who are the persons listed above, if any, whose job is so closely related to <u>yours</u> that you believe the two jobs <u>must</u> be performed collaboratively in order for either of you to perform his work effectively?"

Responses to these two questions by teachers and unit leaders provide the data for the sociometric charts in the appendix. These charts give us a view of organizational structure as revealed by a mapping of interdependence relationships.

Let us first note the patterning of interdependence relationships in the school as a whole. Figure 1 diagrams these relationships in one of the multiunit schools in our study. Note that each of the five units of the school constitutes a cluster of interdependent relationships. The members of a unit depend heavily on other members for the successful performance of their work. On the other hand, interaction of the type we are examining is entirely intra-unit as far as the relationships of teachers to one another are concerned. It is a striking fact that not a single teacher nominates a teacher (or a unit leader)

outside his own unit. We take this to mean that collaborative work effort is confined essentially within the unit.

While the structure of each of the five units is similar, it is not identical. Let us distinguish between what we shall call a "dependence relationship" (a dotted line in the chart indicating nomination in question 1) and an "essential relationship" (indicating nomination also in question 2). Clearly, the units vary in the proportion of essential relationships to dependence relationships.

Unit five has the maximum possible number of essential relationships; each person sees himself as having an essential relationship with every other member of the unit. This represents the highest possible level of interdependence. On the other hand, unit four is the "loosest" collaborative unit, characterized by fewer essential relationships and a lower level of interdependence.

The unit leaders are focal points of interaction in the units and also serve as connecting links between the teacher and the principal. As is the case with teachers, however, no unit leader nominates another unit leader (or a teacher in another unit), indicating an absence of dependence between units of the school. It is worth observing that while this school has an active Instructional Improvement Committee, the absence of interdependence relationships between unit leaders and teachers in different units indicates that collaborative relationships between units is minimal. Otherwise put, the goal of having the Instructional Improvement Committee coordinate the program of the entire school has made little headway if the absence of interdependence relationships is interpreted as evidence of a lack of coordination of the work of units.

The principal receives nominations from most teachers and all of the unit leaders. For three of the five unit leaders, an essential relationship is seen with the principal. Only three teachers, however, view their relationship with the principal as essential.

Figure 2 diagrams the interdependence relationships in a control school. We see at once that the patterning of relationships is quite different from that of the multiunit school. The principal is the obvious focus of nominations, receiving all but two of twenty-five possible nominations, with ten of the twenty-three being essential relationships. There are obviously few interaction clusters among teachers. In every case where self-contained classrooms exist, there are few interdependence relationships. The cluster of relationships at 10 o'clock on the chart is a team teaching situation; that at 6 o'clock involves a special ungraded class to which all three teachers are assigned. With the exception of these special situations, interdependence relationships between teachers are few, rarely essential, and usually related to grade level taught. There is, in fact, only one instance where a nomination is made across grade levels.

Let us at this point make a few generalizations that extend beyond the two schools we have been considering. First, the pattern of relationships in the control school shown in figure 2 is almost identical to that of the other control schools in our sample. Indeed, the pattern is similar to that of other elementary schools we have studied elsewhere in the country. If anything, the control schools show more interdependence relationships than are usually encountered, owing largely to the presence of team teaching and other collaborative undertakings not found in the typical school characterized by the self-contained classroom. The fact is the traditionally organized elementary school in the United States has a primitive division of labor and differentiation of functions in its professional staff. Grade level is the only consistent basis for distinguishing among teachers. Emphasis is on the functions universally performed by teachers, not on the coordination of effort or any form of specialization.

In the other multiunit schools in our sample we find patterns of relationships similar in some respects to the multiunit school shown in figure 1. There are also some variations from one school to the other. As far as similarities are concerned, we find that all multiunit schools have a network of interdependence relationships within each unit.

Consistently, therefore, multiunit schools are successful in encouraging the establishment of some collaborative activity. Interdependence relationships are nonetheless

confined to the members of one's own unit. The unit leaders in nearly all cases receive more nominations, especially for essential relationships, than do the teachers. Unit leaders also serve consistently as linkage agents between teachers and the principal.

In other respects we find variations in schools and from one unit to another within a school. The extent and balance of dependence relationships and essential relationships differ from school to school and unit to unit. As figure 3 shows, it is possible for virtually all relationships to be essential ones in one unit, while another unit in the same school has a pattern containing a mixture of essential and dependence relationships as well as a lack of indicated relationships of either type. Thus, while some collaborative activity is found in all schools, its extent is uneven, reflecting differential success in the development of interdependence relationships.

In no two multiunit schools in our sample is the place of the principal in the interaction network the same. The principal in figure 1 receives more nominations than the principals in the other schools. In one school the principal receives but a few scattered nominations, indicating that he is not the focal point of interaction. This means--recalling the two questions on which the charts are based--that most teachers do not depend heavily on the principal in order to do their work. Instead, each unit operates almost independently, relying heavily on its unit leader for support, advice, and assistance.

The sociometric charts we have discussed map the nominations of teachers and unit leaders. If we examine the responses of principals to the same two questions on which these charts are based, we find differences between multiunit school principals and control school principals. The multiunit school principal reports that his successful job performance depends on a number of people. He lists considerably more names than the control school principal does. The former's list of essential relationships is especially longer than that of his counterpart. Typically, the multiunit principal lists essential relationships with all the unit leaders and his secretary, and occasionally with another person or two.

The control school principal, on the other hand, lists few essential relationships; they are usually limited to his secretary and the custodian. The multiunit school principal is clearly part of an expanded interaction network in which his relations to his faculty have changed considerably from those that prevail in control schools. We will return to the implications of this situation for the job of the principal later in the paper.

In concluding this analysis of interdependence relationships, we should also mention that the interaction network of the unit includes instructional and clerical aides. Nominations of these aides by unit leaders and teachers are frequent and the relationships are often considered essential. Aides, therefore, are important figures in the network of interdependence relationships within the units of these schools.

division of labor in the multiunit school

Collaborative instruction, planning, and evaluation as called for by the multiunit system can be expected to lead to modifications in the division of labor within the school. In this section of the paper, we will discuss two important matters bearing on the division of labor. The first is the development of specialization within the unit and the second is the impact of the unit leader position on the positions of the teacher and the principal.

When principals and teachers discuss specialization in the elementary school, they usually conceive of it in terms of subject-matter specialization or departmentalization, both of which are usually regarded in a negative light. Principals especially are likely to take a stand against departmentalization and specialization, contending that the elementary school is an inappropriate setting for making teaching assignments by subject-matter areas. Teachers generally express similar attitudes. Several indicated approvingly during our interviews that all teachers in their school are expected to teach in all areas.

Perhaps because of these biases against specialization, teachers and principals see little of it emerging in the multiunit school. Principals, in fact, gave us no examples of specialization; they are perhaps not close enough to the activities of the unit to be aware of the specialization coming into being. Teachers, interestingly, are similarly unaware of specialization, perhaps because each is aware only of his own role and does not think of the unit in terms of specialization. Even when a teacher reports teaching most of the math in his unit, or says he has taken over all of the work in remedial reading, he discusses the matter in terms of "teaching to one's strengths" rather than conceptualizing the situation as one where specialization is occurring.

In the multiunit school, the unit leader--not the teacher or principal--is concerned with the management and coordination of unit activities. Therefore, it isn't surprising to find that interview questions about specialization get quite different responses from unit leaders than from teachers and principals. In general, unit leaders see considerably more specialization than is reported by teachers or principals. A substantial amount of this specialization is conventional in nature--i.e., teachers specialize by subject-matter areas. More such specialization exists than is usually perceived by the people involved. If, as is often reported, one teacher in a unit takes over the math instruction and another who is especially good in science takes over most instruction in that subject, it seems clear that the other teachers in the unit, consciously or not, must "specialize" in the other subjects that remain to be taught.

Two other conventional types of specialization are fairly commonplace. In some units, especially in large ones, there remains considerable specialization by grade level, despite the formal abolition of grades as such. There is also specialization in that some teachers work primarily with certain ability groupings or spend much of their time with remedial classes.

Interestingly, however, specialization in the multiunit school is not confined to these conventional forms. Perhaps of more significance for the multiunit school in the long run is the fact that new and often novel kinds of specialization are beginning to emerge in the units. Three main types have come to our attention:

1. Some teachers devote most of their time to working with individual pupils, while others work mainly with small groups or class-sized groups. In two of the schools studied, individualized and small-group instruction are heavily emphasized. In these schools, some teachers reported spending 75 per cent of their time working with individual students; others said they devoted the same proportion of their time to small groups or to class-sized ones. A few teachers took special responsibilities for working with even larger groups than the usual class-sized ones, usually at the beginning or end of study units. There is, then, considerable specialization in some multiunit schools for teaching in an individual, small-group, or large-group setting. In light of the emphasis given to individual and small-group instruction in the multiunit system, the development of such specializations is to be anticipated. There are, however, disparities in the amount of such instruction from one unit to another within a school, and one of the schools studied retained class-sized groups almost exclusively. Individualized instruction in this school consisted almost entirely of routine drill by instructional aides.

2. A second type of evidence of emerging specialization is the fact some teachers are serving as expert advisors to their colleagues. The obvious case where this occurs is when a teacher has had special training in some subject. When such a teacher is in a unit it is natural for others to rely on his expertise. The availability of this kind of expertise is largely fortuitous, of course, and no unit can expect to obtain expert competence everywhere it is needed through chance circumstances. For this reason, some units have deliberately urged their members to develop specialized competences. Even when specialized training is lacking, a teacher may be asked to take the responsibility for learning about developments pertaining, for example, to certain materials or media and for keeping his fellow teachers informed on the subject. Other teachers in the unit are assigned to other topics. The emergence of this kind of specialization, we believe, is a highly promising development. It permits a type of accumulation and pooling of knowledge

not possible under different circumstances.

3. A third type of specialization relates to special assignments. In several units we studied, teachers are given special responsibilities for planning units of instruction. The logic of this procedure is extended in one instance to the entire instructional process; in one unit, the teachers plan the different phases of the instructional units and each takes responsibility for one or more phases of the total process. When the instructional unit is presented to the students, teachers play special roles in certain phases of the instructional process such as introducing the instructional unit or evaluating it. Such assignments often are temporary and fleeting. This type of division of labor, in fact, is characterized by its variable nature as well as by its temporariness. It offers opportunites to get jobs done that could hardly be obtained in a more permanent and fixed division of labor.

Our second topic bearing on the division of labor in the multiunit school concerns the impact of the position of unit leader on the teacher and the principal. In our interviews with school personnel, we obtained information on how the job of the unit leader contributes to effective work by teachers. In one school our respondents stated that the unit leader facilitates the work of the teacher by doing the following kinds of things: searching for, obtaining, and preparing new materials; scheduling the activities of the unit and arranging for necessary space and facilities; grouping students and making appropriate teaching assignments; handling reporting chores; helping teachers keep up with new developments; discussing instructional problems of individual teachers; advising teachers on their relationships with parents; keeping up teacher morale; and relieving teachers of routine chores. These functions indicate that in this particular school the roles of the unit leader as they relate to the teacher fall both in the realms of instructional leadership and administration.

In the other two schools studied, the roles of the unit leader were less clearly conceptualized. Some people interviewed did conceive of the unit leader's roles in terms of instructional leadership and managerial responsibility. Others, however, saw the unit leader as a minor functionary whose primary duty was to relieve teachers of routine and bothersome chores, or as a jack-of-all-trades who does whatever is required at a given moment to help out the teachers of the unit.

A considerable amount of attention in our interviews was devoted to the relationships of the unit leader and the principal. We were particularly interested in seeing how the two jobs relate to one another, and we asked questions about tasks unit leaders perform that might be carried out by the principal in the conventionally organized school. All principals and unit leaders agreed that the unit leader has taken over a variety of such tasks. For example, unit leaders were said to handle discipline problems at the level above that of the teacher, to serve as an advisor and morale booster for their teachers, to brief teachers on school and district policies and procedures, to channel information to the teachers from a variety of sources (including the principal), to make arrangements for building use, to obtain consultant help, to arrange field trips, to deal with the central office on a variety of matters, to train new teachers, and to take general responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum.

One principal told us that in his school "unit leaders do a lot of administrative work. They do the scheduling, run inservice training programs, supervise and evaluate the teachers, group the students, and make basic instructional decisions that I otherwise would have to make."

A second principal indicated that in his school each unit is "a school within a school." Each unit, he explained, is virtually autonomous and independent (This school has no Instructional Improvement Committee). In the third school, the authority and functions of the principal had been transferred to the unit leaders to an even greater extent.

It is clear, therefore, that many of the duties ordinarily performed by principals have been turned over to the unit leader. This situation raises questions about the effectiveness of both sets of roles under prevailing circumstances. We shall mention some of these in the last part of this paper.

authority, decision-making processes, and influence

One of the most important aspects of multiunit organization is its effects on authority and decision making. In our research we were concerned with the location of decision-making prerogatives and the extent to which power and influence are concentrated or dispersed in the school. We were particularly interested in discovering the kinds of changes multiunit organization produces in decision-making processes and the status hierarchy.

While we gathered various kinds of data dealing with power and decision making at the school and school district levels, we shall summarize some findings on but two dimensions of the general subject. The first deals with where the authority lies for making certain types of decisions. The second is concerned with the influence hierarchy of the school.

To obtain data on authority structures, we asked each teacher to indicate the role he plays in the decision-making process for various types of classroom-related decisions. The decisions dealt with five activities: the choice of teaching methods used in the classroom, determining the scope and sequence of subject-matter content, the choice of instructional materials other than textbooks, deciding on pupil promotion, and scheduling daily classroom activities.

For each of the five decisions, each respondent was asked to indicate if he had:

a. complete autonomy to make the decision himself,

b. final authority to make the decision after receiving suggestions and recommendations from others,

c. authority to make the decision within certain limits,

d. authority to share the decision with other persons in a group decision-making process, or

e. no voice in making the decision (i.e., the decision is made by others).

When the respondent chose any but the first alternative, he was asked to identify the other persons involved in the decision-making process.

To highlight the patterns of responses in the multiunit schools, we first note the situation in the control schools. While there is some variation in responses for the five types of decisions, the general pattern is for the individual teacher to make the decisions, either in consultation with the principal or within certain limits prescribed by him. Decision making affecting each classroom is the prerogative mainly of the two individuals: the teacher, serving as primary decision-maker, and the principal, who provides advice or sets the limits within which the teacher has discretion. Few teachers see themselves as involved in group decision-making of any kind with regard to any of these items.

The distribution of responses provides a view of the school as being composed of separate, relatively isolated classrooms, with the activities of each classroom being determined primarily by the teacher monitored to a greater or lesser extent by the principal. For the school as a whole, the principal is the central authority figure; he is the only person whose activities extend beyond the individual classroom.

In the multiunit school there is evidence that the decision-making pattern we have just described is being changed significantly. There are some variations in responses for the different types of decisions, and the pattern is somewhat different for each school. Yet there are some important generalizations that emerge. For one thing, fewer teachers see themselves as making decisions individually than is the case in control schools. Substantial numbers of teachers indicate that decisions are shared with others in a group decision-making process. The teachers who indicate they make decisions individually after receiving suggestions and recommendations from others include fellow teachers among these "others." Otherwise stated, there is a notable shift away from reliance on the principal for advice and assistance to a situation in which colleagues serve such a function. In general, decision making is moving from the level of the individual classroom to that of the unit. Decisions are being made by the unit leader and teachers,

usually in a collaborative situation.

When the teacher seeks advice from a single figure of authority in the multiunit school, it is likely that he will turn to the unit leader rather than to the principal. Usually the principal is not directly involved in the decision-making processes of the unit. Whether or not he has an indirect impact depends on his ability to work effectively with unit leaders in a Building Committee or Instructional Improvement Committee.

What happened in actual practice varied among the schools in our sample. In one school, the Instructional Improvement Committee functioned fairly effectively; decisions of school-wide importance made collaboratively by the principal and the unit leaders affected what went on in the units. In a second school there was no Instructional Improvement Committee, but the principal retained some influence because of his personal relations with individual teachers. The third school presented yet a different case: decisions in the Instructional Improvement Committee rarely dealt with instructional problems of concern to the units. As a result, the principal's influence on decisions made in the unit was slight. Unit affairs were decided by the unit leader and the teachers.

Just as there has been changes in authority and decision making in the multiunit school, there has been modifications in the "influence structure" or "power structure." We asked our respondents to complete the following questionnaire item:

> "If you wanted to receive approval from the faculty of your school for an idea you were proposing, it would sometimes be helpful to enlist the support of certain other individuals in your school. Please list below, by name and position, the individuals whose support for your ideas would help most in obtaining faculty approval."

Tabulations of the frequency with which individuals were named gave us a picture of the influence hierarchy in each school.

In the control schools, the influence hierarchy is dominated by the principal. Typically, the principal receives three to four times as many nominations as any other individual. Usually only two or three teachers get as many as one-third to one-fourth the number of nominations received by the principal. Nearly all teachers in the school are mentioned once or twice, indicating a lack of concensus about who are the influential teachers. This is, of course, a highly centralized influence structure that revolves around one dominant figure, the principal.

It is to be anticipated that multiunit organization changes this situation. Only one generalization, however, stands for all schools--namely, the unit leaders in all instances emerge as significant persons in the influence hierarchy. In other respects, the changes that occur vary from school to school. The principal in one school received twenty-two nominations while his three unit leaders received sixteen, fourteen, and eleven respectively. No one else in the school received over three nominations. In a second school the principal had twenty nominations. Three unit leaders received nine, one received eight and one five. No one else received over two nominations.

In both of these schools the principal's influence is obviously shared with the unit leaders. The unit leaders are seen as influential not only by members of their own units, but by some persons in other units as well. Evidence drawn from these two schools reveals that the creation of a new formal position, that of unit leader, has changed the influence structures so that influence is shared by a larger number of persons. At the same time, the principal remains the single most influential person in these schools.

The situation in the third school, however, is quite different. Here one unit leader and the librarian in the Instructional Materials Center each get six nominations; the other two unit leaders, a teacher, and the principal each get five; and two other teachers receive four and three, respectively. This is an example of dispersed influence where the traditional dominance of the principal has evaporated.

To generalize, then, we can see that multiunit organization seemingly insures the development of a more decentralized influence

hierarchy than is found in the control schools. The exact form of this decentralized structure, however, varies from school to school. We suspect that in the long run the functioning of the school's Instructional Improvement Committee will be an important determinant of the form of the influence hierarchy.

operational goals of teachers

Given the objectives of the Wisconsin R & D Center in developing the multiunit school model, it is important to ask whether or not it has been possible to make any appreciable changes in the operational work goals which teachers set for themselves. In our questionnaire we listed the following operational goals:

encouraging creativity among students;

maintaining an orderly and quiet classroom;

enriching the course of study or curriculum of the classroom;

giving individual attention to students;

experimenting with new teaching techniques;

diagnosing learning problems of students;

coordinating classroom activities with other parts of the school program;

insuring that students learn basic skills;

solving personal problems of individual students;

developing student ability in analytical reasoning and problem solving;

developing the aesthetic potential of students.

We asked each teacher to indicate which three of these he considers most vital or important in his work as a teacher.

In the multiunit schools, "giving individual attention to students" and "diagnosing learning problems of students" ranked first and second in importance. In contrast, teachers in the control schools ranked "insuring that students learn basic skills" first, followed by "developing student ability in analytical reasoning and problem-solving." As teachers state their objectives, therefore, we find that individually guided education and diagnosis of learning problems are seen as the primary goals to be pursued by teachers in the multiunit school.

We discovered that from the point of view of the teachers, the "climate of expectations" regarding objectives is seen as different in multiunit and control schools. Evidence of this is provided by data obtained when we asked teachers which of the previously listed items they believe their principal would consider most important in the work of the teacher. Teachers in the multiunit schools listed "experimenting with new teaching techniques" and "giving individual attention to students" as objectives their principals would consider most important. On the other hand, teachers in control schools thought their principals would give first rank to "insuring that students learn basic skills." Tied for second place were "developing student ability in analytical reasoning and problem solving" and "enriching the course of study or curriculum in the classroom."

Teachers were asked to indicate which objectives they could best achieve given the existing conditions in their school. Multiunit school teachers ranked "experimenting with new teaching techniques" first and "enriching the course of study or curriculum of the classroom" second. Teachers in the control schools ranked "insuring that children learn basic skills" first and "encouraging creativity among students" second.

job satisfaction and environmental climate

In our research we also examined some of the social psychological dimensions of organization analysis. One objective was to measure the attitudes of school personnel toward their work and their work environment. In one part of the study, teachers responded to a ten-item, job-satisfaction scale. For three

items, the proportions reporting that they were "highly satisfied" were only slightly greater in the multiunit than in the control schools. A comparison of the other seven items reveals considerable differences, all in favor of the multiunit school.

The seven items, together with the proportions responding "highly satisfied" in multiunit and control schools, are as follows:

satisfaction with progress toward one's personal goals in present position, 26 per cent and 15 per cent;

satisfaction with personal relationships with administrators and supervisors, 61 per cent and 39 per cent;

opportunity to accept responsibility for one's own work or the work of others, 61 per cent and 43 per cent;

seeing positive results from one's efforts, 36 per cent and 15 per cent;

personal relationships with fellow teachers, 73 per cent and 55 per cent;

satisfaction with present job in light of one's career expectations, 56 per cent and 39 per cent;

the availability of pertinent instructional materials and aids, 60 per cent and 27 per cent.

In another part of the study, teachers responded to items that were designed to reveal their perceptions of the extent of freedom and rigidity in school policies. More teachers in multiunit schools than in control schools (68 per cent and 42 per cent) believed that it is highly accurate to say that school policies encourage freedom in the selection of instructional materials. The statement that "school policies encourage freedom in student use of the library or other learning resources" was regarded as "highly accurate" by 64 per cent of the teachers in the multiunit schools and 35 per cent of those in the control schools. That school policies encourage freedom in experimenting with new teaching techniques was seen as a highly accurate statement by 93 per cent of the multiunit teachers as compared to 60 per cent of the control school teachers. On the other hand, the statement "school policies encourage close adherence to official course outlines and/or curriculum guides" was seen as highly accurate by only 6 per cent of the teachers in multiunit schools, but by 32 per cent in the control schools. Responses to these items provide some evidence that teachers in multiunit schools perceive their environment to be more free, less rigid, and more open to experimentation than do the teachers in control schools.

SOME BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT MULTIUNIT SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

Many of our conclusions to this point should be heartening to the designers and proponents of the multiunit school. It seems safe to say that the multiunit system holds high promise of ameliorating some of the endemic problems encountered in elementary schools. Nonetheless, in the course of analyzing data on the attributes of the multiunit school, it has become clear that operating schools of this type presents a variety of problems that must be solved if the schools are to function at a high level of effectiveness. It is our conclusion that no single "form" or "model" of multiunit organization has been implemented in the schools we studied. There is, as a matter of fact, considerable variation in structure, policies, and practices. This variation in itself, of course, does not necessarily produce problems.

What does lead to problems is the fact that there has not yet been enough experimentation and systematic study to determine which structural forms and operational policies work best in the multiunit school. Nor is it yet known precisely which roles are effective for which positions in this new context. Particularly important here are questions about the roles associated with the positions of unit leader and principal.

In concluding, we should like to raise a few questions about the structure of the school and the roles of personnel.

1. Our first question deals with the relationship between unit size and unit effectiveness. In raising this question, we make the assumption that a high level of interdependence relationships is required if a unit is to function effectively. That is, we assume that to plan, teach, and evaluate collaboratively, a high level of interdependence among unit members is necessary. This being the case, it becomes appropriate to ask what the organizational conditions are that make it likely that a high level of interdependence will develop.

We should like to call your attention once again to figure 3 in the appendix. The networks of interdependence relationships obviously are different in the two units shown in this chart. In the smaller unit, the unit leader and the teachers are bound together in reciprocal ties that are, with only one exception, seen as essential relationships by unit members. The larger unit, in contrast, shows a considerably lower level of interdependence. In fact, interdependence relationships between some members of the unit are entirely lacking. Even ties with the unit leader are not always seen as essential relationships. Rather than forming a single network of interdependence relationships, the unit is segmented into subgroupings or subnetworks based largely on what is, in effect, grade level taught. This is a reversion to a pattern of relationships that sometimes develops in the traditional elementary school, as is illustrated in figure 4.

These differences between small and large units are found consistently in the schools we studied. There is a higher level of interdependence in the smaller units than in the larger ones. Segmentation by grade level frequently appears in the larger units. It is for these reasons that the question of optimal size of units

arises as an important practical issue in designing the multiunit school. The pertinent question is this: How many teachers can collaborate effectively with one another, the unit leader, and nonprofessionals in the unit setting?

Social-science knowledge about the nature of interaction in human groups tells us that interaction can be close and intense only in relatively small groups. The optimum size of groups is further reduced when group interaction is instrumental in nature--i.e., it is not an end in itself. In units of the multiunit school, where instruction is the main objective of the group and improving interaction patterns is but a means to that end, there are certainly limits to the number of people to which an individual can be tied in an effective interdependence network. What the optimum size range is in units is a matter, we believe, that merits serious discussion and study.

2. Questions also arise with regard to the functions of the Instructional Improvement Committee. Two of the three schools studied had an Instructional Improvement Committee. In our interviews we found considerable vagueness in people's minds concerning the functions of the committee. In one school, the committee seemed to serve primarily as a vehicle for channeling news to teachers. To put it in another way, the agenda of meetings of the Instructional Improvement Committee was similar to that of general faculty meetings in a conventional school. The Instructional Improvement Commitee in the other school spent more time in discussions related to instruction, but here also understandings were lacking concerning the exact functions of this committee. While it seemed to be generally agreed "the Instructional Improvement Committee should coordinate the curriculum of the entire school," what this coordination should consist of and how it should be accomplished were unclear.

Another problem concerned conflicting authority in relations between the Instructional Improvement Committee and individual units. Which decisions are to be the exclusive prerogative of unit members and which decisions are to be made for the entire school by the Instructional Improvement Committee? We found no clear answers to these questions.

We obtained little evidence in either school that the Instructional Improvement Committee functioned as an important decision-making group. Indeed, there is some evidence to the contrary. For example, if the Instructional Improvement Committee were a closely knit body, interdependence relationships would develop among unit leaders and the principal. As things stand, unit leaders and the principal do not form an interdependence network. In figure 1, for example, we notice that the unit leaders do not nominate each other. Rather, they are tied to their unit members and to the principal individually.

3. A third set of questions deals with specialization among members of the unit. We shall not elaborate extensively on this matter because we have discussed specialization at some length earlier. There is a question as to the extent to which specialization should be encouraged systematically within the unit, and also a question concerning the types of specialization that will contribute most to the effective functioning of units. As noted earlier, considerable bias exists against specialization because it is equated with departmentalization. On the other hand, specializations have emerged in the units that are both natural and creative, as we have shown. Again this is a matter that should be investigated carefully.

4. Questions also arise concerning the relative emphasis on different roles in the position of unit leader. There is no general agreement concerning the roles that should be emphasized in this position. The position, however, calls for three main sets of roles--instructional leader, administrator, and teacher--and it seems that all three must be performed capably if the unit is to function effectively. An appropriate balance of the three sets of roles is, however, hard to establish and maintain. There probably will be pressure to make continual additions to the administrative responsibilities of unit leaders. If this occurs, we can expect effective performance of the other two sets of roles to suffer, particularly that of instructional leader.

5. Finally, several questions should be posed about the principalship in the multiunit school. The multiunit model, as developed by the Wisconsin R & D Center, envisages

an important place for the principal in instructional leadership. Yet it is apparent that the principal's role as an instructional leader must be different from that which he plays in a conventional school. The multiunit school is so organized that many of the usual duties of the principal are shifted to the unit leader. In the multiunit school the teacher naturally turns first to the unit leader for such assistance, as we showed earlier when we presented data on ways in which the unit leader helps make the teacher's job more effective. The closely knit nature of the unit, together with the almost constant availability of the unit leader for consultation, makes it almost certain that the teacher will turn to the unit leader rather than to the principal for instructional leadership. Even the insecure teacher, who might fear revealing his inadequacies to the principal in the conventional school, cannot hide these deficiencies behind the door of a self-contained classroom in the multiunit school. The teacher in the multiunit school teaches in public and the pressures of the situation logically lead to consultation with the unit leader when problems occur.

Given the work situation that prevails, then, the unit leader is the natural instructional leader for the unit. The instructional leadership of the principal will no be enhanced if he seeks to usurp the functions of the unit leader. Instead, the potentialities for instructional leadership for the principal lie elsewhere. One appropriate role is for the principal to insure that each unit is properly organized for instruction, that the unit leader and teachers develop the interdependence relationships necessary to make relevant decisions and carry out their instructional tasks.

On the other hand, the principal can operate effectively as the chairman of the Instructional Improvement Committee. As the coordinator and advisor of the unit leaders, he could make important contributions to the instructional program of the school as a whole. In any case, the role of the principal as an instructional leader merits further attention and clarification.

APPENDIX

SOCIOMETRIC CHARTS

Data on which the following charts are based consist of responses by teachers and unit leaders to the following questions:

(1) List the names of those persons . . . on whom you depend most heavily in order to perform your job effectively.

(2) Who are the persons listed above, if any, whose job is so closely related to yours that you believe the two jobs must be performed collaboratively in order for either of you to perform his work effectively?

Legend:

X - - - - - ►Y : X named Y in Q. 1.

X ◄- - - - ►Y : X and Y named each other in Q. 1.

X ——————►Y : X named Y in Q. 2.

X ◄—————►Y : X and Y named each other in Q. 2.

X ◄- - -——►Y : X named Y in Q. 2., Y named X in Q. 1.

FIGURE 1

INTERDEPENDENCE RELATIONSHIPS IN A MULTIUNIT SCHOOL

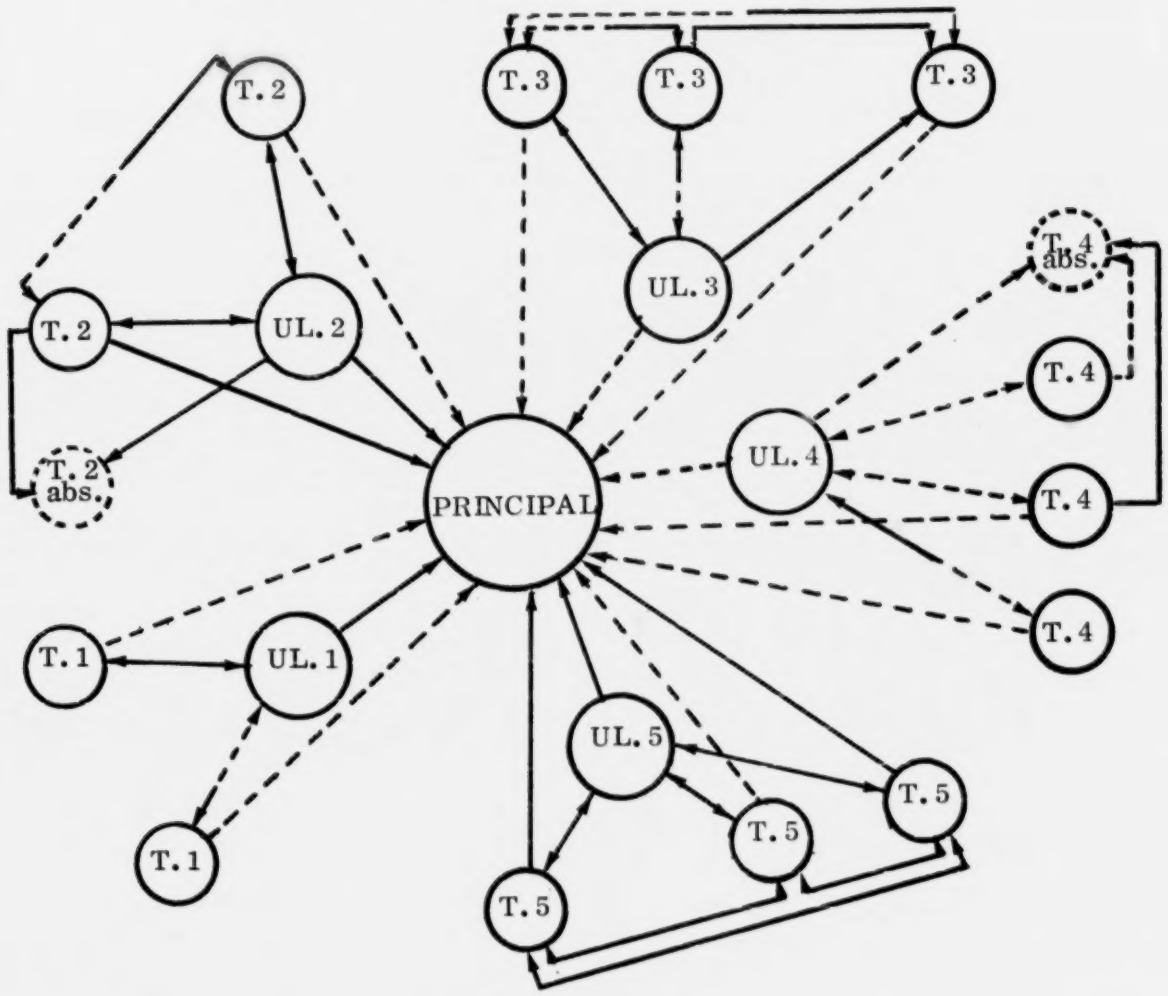

FIGURE 2

INTERDEPENDENCE RELATIONSHIPS IN A CONTROL SCHOOL

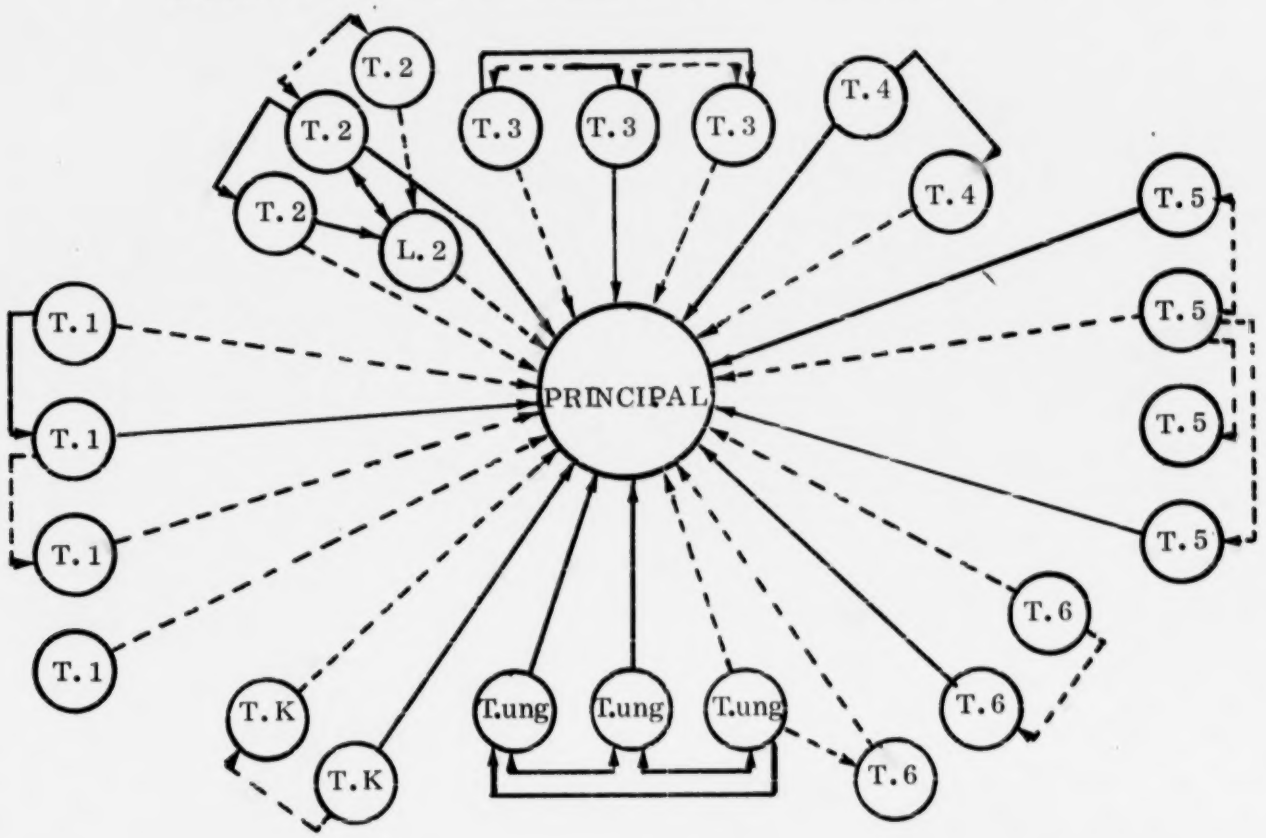

FIGURE 3

A COMPARISON OF INTERDEPENDENCE RELATIONSHIPS IN A LARGE UNIT AND A SMALL UNIT IN A MULTIUNIT SCHOOL

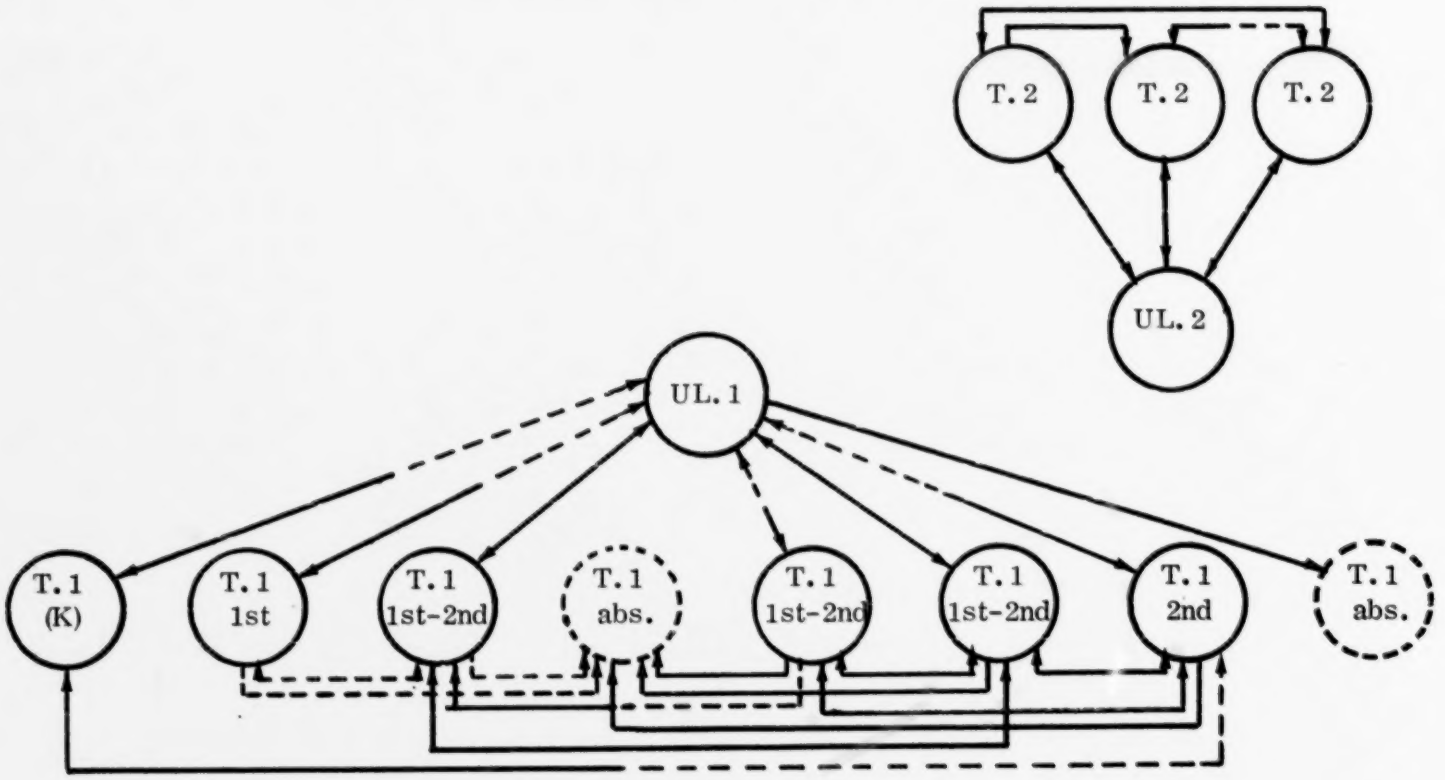

FIGURE 4

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERDEPENDENCE RELATIONSHIPS IN SELECTED GRADE LEVELS IN TWO CONTROL SCHOOLS